

There are those who have suggested that the allocation of old growth acres should be higher. The dedicated old growth represents only a portion of the old-growth habitat existing on the forest. Additional old growth will remain protected in wilderness, semiprimitive areas and other management allocations that are distributed across the forest.

Connectivity corridors provide travelways between old growth areas. Although important for all wildlife, it is crucial for small game so that populations do not become genetically secluded. My selected alternative provides for connectivity corridors through land allocations in riparian areas, visual corridors, wild and scenic rivers and more.

The State of Oregon is concerned about the amount of ponderosa pine old growth in dedicated old growth (Management Area 13) and so am I. They have requested that we reassess that amount of old growth which is captured in designated areas. I feel this is a reasonable request and have asked the Forest Supervisor to inventory designated old growth within one year to ensure that at least 5,000 to 7,000 acres are in ponderosa pine climax or in mixed conifer with a majority of ponderosa pine. If the inventory shows dedicated old growth does not capture at least this acreage, steps will be taken to rectify this situation.

Preliminary information from the new timber inventory, currently underway, will provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the old growth situation within two years. At that time, I will consider whether or not changes in old growth forest management measures are necessary. For additional information on old growth reference the FEIS, IX, INDEX, "OLD GROWTH".

ISSUE AREA : Visuals

Visuals are an integral part of the Malheur National Forest. Many publics come to enjoy a recreational setting away from an urban life and the scenery is part of their total outdoor experience. There was a great deal of public comment about the visual character of the Forest in response to the DEIS. In general, respondents felt that maintaining the visual integrity of the Forest was important. Several publics, including the State of Oregon, suggested that we use uneven-aged management to retain large diameter trees in critical viewshed.

Our analysis showed that uneven-aged management can be used to retain large diameter trees in specific areas. This was one of the reasons that Alternative I allocated 30% of the suitable timber lands to uneven-aged management. In addition Alternative I established tighter standards to retain the visual character of the Forest.

The State of Oregon commented on two specific visual areas, Logan Valley and along the North Fork of the Malheur trail. In Logan Valley they requested to change the foreground from retention to partial retention, the latter being less restrictive on timber harvesting, thus gaining a possible 1 MMBF to the ASQ. I seriously considered their request and fully realize the importance additional ASQ is to the timber industry but felt that the impacts to the Logan Valley visual corridor did not warrant an additional 1 MMBF.

My rationale for retaining the Logan Valley foreground at retention is fairly straight forward. The area is under consideration for a Scenic Byway and as such is definitely a visually sensitive area. I am not certain that it is possible to schedule additional ASQ in this area without dramatically altering the landscape, but I do agree that if the uses are compatible we should schedule more harvest. Therefore I have directed the Forest Supervisor to proceed with a corridor plan in this viewshed (with foreground at retention). After completion of a corridor plan I will revisit the opportunity for additional volume by

changing to partial retention. I feel this way we will be in a much stronger position to make a decision in this sensitive area

The State also requested that the visual middleground be protected from the North Fork Malheur trail and meadows. The middleground is area 1/4 to 3 miles from the viewpoint, in this case the trail and meadow I fully agree with this request and have added a standard which allows protection to the middleground as seen from the trail and meadow

For additional information on visuals reference the FEIS, IX, INDEX, "VISUAL RESOURCE and VISUALS CORRIDORS".

ISSUE AREA : Native American Treaty Rights

Following release of the Draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan, the Forest received formal and detailed substantive comments and recommendations from Native American groups, primarily Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Most comments were highly critical of the consideration given to Native American treaty rights. Often mentioned were strong concerns over lack of adequate protection of Forest resources, specifically anadromous fisheries and riparian zones, big game, timber management, old growth, and unroaded areas.

During development of the final Forest Plan, the Forest has consulted with Native American people to ensure greater consideration to their needs and rights under existing treaties. Both through formal and informal consultation with Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and other Native American groups, the Forest has established greater understanding of Native American concerns for management of the Malheur National Forest.

The selected alternative affords greater consideration to the treaty-protected rights of fishing and hunting than was provided in the DEIS preferred alternative (Alternative F). Anadromous fish are a resource having subsistence, ceremonial, and commercial value to tribal members. The Forest has a substantial role in anadromous fish production in the Columbia River basin, as the Forest manages much of the headwater lands of the greater John Day River system. The Forest also manages lands within the headwaters of the Malheur River system, where the Burns Paiute, Cayuse, Umatilla (CTUIR), Nez Perce (LAPWAI), and Tenino (Warm Springs) once shared camps in and around Logan Valley.

Additionally, the selected alternative will support big game populations, which are important to tribes for both subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Emphasis will be given to wildlife management in most unroaded areas. Uneven-aged timber management will be featured on many acres of the Forest, with production of ponderosa pine a key emphasis. Livestock grazing and protection of Native sites having religious and cultural importance are also provided for by the Plan.

I expect the Forest to establish and maintain even closer coordination and a government to government relationship with the tribes in the future on implementation and monitoring of the Forest Plan. For additional information on this subject reference the FEIS, CHAPTER IX, INDEX, "NATIVE AMERICAN and NATIVE AMERICAN TREATY RIGHTS"

ISSUE AREA · Wild and Scenic Rivers

Since the draft EIS was published, evaluation of all potential candidates for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542) has been completed. Comments received on the DEIS were incorporated into this analysis. A discussion of the process is included in CHAPTER III of the FEIS. As